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ABSTRACT

The Department of Anthropology and the Educational Assessment Center (EAC) cooperated in a project to assess the effect of certain variables on student ratings of instruction. For this purpose, the entire teaching faculty of the department was requested by the department's Teaching Effectiveness committee to administer the EAC Student Ratings Form to their students. In addition, the faculty was asked to include three special items: (1) Percentage of class meetings of this course you attended this quarter, (2) Percentage of assigned reading completed, and (3) How have factors which are out of the instructor's control influenced your evaluation of this course. Results indicate that class attendance is positively related to teacher ratings, that completion of class assignments is not strongly related to teacher ratings, and that factors outside of the instructor's control have a moderately high correlation with teacher ratings. Since the implications of the findings in the third item are potentially important, the committee will undertake further research. (Author/BJG)

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A Preliminary Report on the Anthropology Department Student Ratings Survey

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The Anthropology Department faculty was requested to administer three special items along with the regular Student Ratings forms, Spring Quarter of 1974. Usable data from 22 classes resulted. Correlations between the third item, "factors outside the instructor's control" and the student ratings items were surprisingly high, and a follow-up study is proposed to further explore the relationship.

Educational Assessment Center Project: 283

A Preliminary Report on the Anthropology Department Student Ratings Survey

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During Spring Quarter, 1974, the Department of Anthropology and the Educational Assessment Center (EAC) cooperated in a project to assess the effect of certain variables on the results of student ratings of instruction. To carry out this purpose, the entire teaching faculty of the department were requested by the department's Teaching Effectiveness committee to administer the EAC Student Ratings Form to their students. In addition, the faculty were requested to include three special questions. These questions, as they were given to students, are found in Table 1.

Twenty-two courses had responses from six or more students for the three special items. All analyses reported are based on these 22 classes.

Analyses were carried out in two ways. First, to see if the three special items significantly discriminated among courses, a one-way analysis of variance was applied to the data, with the between groups variance deriving from differences among class means, and the within groups variance deriving from differences among student raters within classes. The results for each item were significant, although the third was only marginally so ($p = .045$).

Since there was significant discrimination between classes, class means for each of the three special items were correlated with the means for the twenty-four student ratings items. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2. For item one, the amount of attendance exhibited by a class as a whole is positively related to ratings. This means that classes with higher average attendance tended to receive more favorable ratings. Of course, the cause and effect relationship is not clear. It could be that students will attend class sessions more frequently if they like the course or that students like the course if they attend more class sessions. In this context, the .70 correlation with Student Ratings

item 22 ("tests are fair") is particularly interesting. It appears that in classes where attendance is poor, teachers may be receiving a "bum rap" when students accuse them of having unfair tests.

Special item 2, the number of class assignments completed by the class, does not show a strong relationship with any of the Student Ratings items.

Finally, the third special item does exhibit moderately high correlations. The direction of the relationship is as expected. Students who view factors out of the instructor's control to have a positive effect, also rate the class more favorably. Students who are unfavorably impressed by factors outside of instructor's control tend to rate the class less favorably. Although the direction of the relationship is as expected, the magnitude is surprisingly high and potentially important. If there are factors which affect an instructor's rating which are out of his/her control, this is very important in assessing the meaning of student rating results. Furthermore, if, as these data suggest, the students can assess the impact of these factors, then it is fairly simple to adjust results appropriately.

There is, however, a viable alternative explanation for the magnitude of the correlations. Unfortunately, the wording of the item itself is rather long and perhaps not altogether lucid. A student who did not read the item carefully might have responded positively or negatively on the basis of his/her feeling about the course as a whole rather than on the basis of the uncontrollable factors. If this happened with moderate frequency, the results would be correlations of the magnitude and direction obtained.

Since the implications of the findings on the third item are potentially important, we would like to do further research on the question. To do so we will need to write new questions which are both clearer (if possible) and written in both directions, i.e., written such that a positive response indicates a positive effect in one case and a negative effect in the other case.

We would like the anthropology faculty to cooperate one more time in having all classes rated this fall quarter. We will send out the

questionnaire packets with the optional questions included or provide overhead transparencies for very large classes just as we did last spring quarter. The items which we propose to use are found in Table 3.

Thanks for cooperating with us again and hopefully we will soon have some interesting results.

Table 1

The Three Special Items

1. Percentage of class meetings of this course you attended during this quarter (to the nearest approximate percent)	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50 or less
2. Percentage of assigned reading completed (to the nearest approximate percent)	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50 or less
3. How have factors which are out of the instructor's control influenced your evaluation of this course (such as time class meets, class room location, class size, personal characteristics of the instructor, reason for taking this course, etc.)?	Strong Negative Influence	Weak Negative Influence	No Influence	Weak Positive Influence	Strong Positive Influence
	(Less Favorable)			(More Favorable)	

Table 2

Correlations between the Special Items and the Student Rating Form

	Student Ratings Items	Special Items 1	2	3
1.	Abstract ideas and theories were clearly interpreted	49	-13	-40
2.	Takes an active, personal interest in the class	39	-10	-51
3.	My skills in thinking were increased	34	-26	-54
4.	Helped broaden my interests	54	-10	-44
5.	Stressed important material	53	-23	-43
6.	Made good use of examples and illustrations	54	-14	-50
7.	Motivated me to do my best	35	-25	-62
8.	Inspired class confidence in instructor's knowledge of subject	59	-18	-48
9.	Gave me new viewpoints or appreciations	44	-30	-44
10.	Clear and understandable in explanations	57	-13	-43
11.	Teaching sessions gave views and info readings did not contain	61	-14	-48
12.	Material enthusiastically presented in teaching sessions	37	-07	-55
13.	Material presented in a well-organized fashion	55	-27	-44
14.	Helpful to individual students	22	-29	-50
15.	Integration of material into coherent whole was	50	-39	-51
16.	Readings clear in presentation of concepts	40	-40	-33
17.	Overall rating of readings	34	-36	-28
18.	How much was your interest in the subject changed by this course?	57	-09	-32
19.	What level of student background knowledge was assumed in teaching sessions?	03	-03	-25
20.	Were students free to ask questions, disagree, express their ideas, etc.?	34	-06	-55
21.	Instructor has improved my problem-solving methods	17	-13	-36
22.	Did test questions cover the material emphasized in the readings and teaching sessions?	70	-27	-41
23.	Would you recommend this course by this instructor to majors in this department?	57	-16	-54
24.	Would you recommend this course by this instructor to non-majors?	51	-30	-51

Table 3

New Items for Anthropology Instructional Evaluations

23. The size of this class is: E VG G F P VP

24. The time of day at which the class meets is: E VG G F P VP

25. The location of the class is: E VG G F P VP

26. The Physical qualities of the classroom are: E VG G F P VP

27. Do you feel that there were circumstances beyond the instructor's control, such as the four above, which caused you to evaluate this course <u>less</u> favorably than you might have otherwise?

    0 = Definitely not
    1 = Probably not
    2 = Possibly
    3 = Probably
    4 = Definitely

28. If everything else about the course were the same, how would you <u>expect</u> to rate a different, equally-qualified instructor?

    0 = Much more favorably than I rated the present instructor
    1 = Somewhat higher
    2 = Probably about the same
    3 = Somewhat lower
    4 = I would rate my present instructor higher

29. Do you think that this course is one which is fairly easy to teach?

    0 = Yes
    1 = About average
    2 = No
    3 = I really have no idea